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Four Year Report

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
1977 - 1980

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The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) was established in 1956 as a separate state agency to provide quality vocational rehabilitation services to eligible handicapped persons in Massachusetts in a timely manner, and to return rehabilitated clients to gainful/competitive, homebound or sheltered employment. Prior to 1956, the program was administered by the Massachusetts Department of Education. The Commission is comprised of a Commissioner and an Advisory Council, an Administrative Office, a Disability Determination Services Division and regional and area offices which are under the general direction of the Commissioner of Rehabilitation.

This document is presented in celebration of the INTERNATIONAL YEAR of DISABLED PERSONS, 1981

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Statler Office Building
20 Providence Street
Boston, 02116

ELMER C. BARTELS
COMMISSIONER

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From the Commissioner

To the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

It gives me great pleasure to present this four year report of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. This special report has been prepared as a comprehensive look at your state vocational rehabilitation agency — programs and progress over the past four years.

The main objective of a State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency is to provide vocational rehabilitation services to physically and mentally handicapped persons in order to enable them to achieve gainful employment. It has been said that vocational rehabilitation services are services to "restore the greatest human asset, the working usefulness of a human being". The administration of such a program is a responsibility that is taken seriously and warrants the very best efforts of all concerned.

Services are available to all eligible physically or mentally disabled persons except to the blind (who are served by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind). The range of services includes counseling, evaluation, physical and mental restoration services, training in schools, colleges, workshops, or on the job training and job placement.

Each year the vocational rehabilitation program in Massachusetts generates future savings and revenue of over $150 million during the working lifetime (average of 20 years) of the approximately 5,000 rehabilitated individuals; plus, the salaries provide purchase power and stimulation of the economy. Thus for every dollar spent on vocational rehabilitation there is a $10.20 return in increased earnings of rehabilitated people. This represents $28 million of earnings in the first year after rehabilitation, of this about $3 million is returned in tax revenues to the state and federal governments each year.

Although the past 4 years have been successful, they have also been difficult ones with respect to revenues and expenses.

The Commonwealth, however, continued its support of the federal/state vocational rehabilitation program by providing increased appropriations in each of the successive years included in this report. The state should be commended for its support of the cost effective program which enables its disabled persons to enter or re-enter the employment world.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission also has an agreement with the federal Department of Health and Human Services to adjudicate Title II (Social Security Disability Insurance) and Title XVI (Supplemental Security Income) disability claims under the Federal Security Act. The goal of the Division of Disability Determination Services of the Commission is to process all Social Security Disability claims in a timely, accurate way.

As Commissioner of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, I want to express my appreciation to the dedicated staff of the agency who have worked so diligently on behalf of the disabled persons they serve. My thanks also to the many persons outside the agency, in the communities, in the legislature and in other programs, and in state and federal government for their continued support of our program.

Elmer C. Bartels

Commissioner of Rehabilitation

For the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the years 1977 thru 1980 were a period of great program innovation and extensive consumer involvement. The specific needs of over one hundred thousand handicapped persons in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts were met with services provided by the Commission; 34 area offices throughout Massachusetts provided easy access to individuals interested in vocational rehabilitation.

Referrals to the Commission were made through a diversity of sources: other agencies, both public and private; hospitals; friends and relatives as well as contact initiated by the individuals themselves. The VR program is for any eligible disabled person regardless of sex, race, religion or nationality.

The Commission has area offices in these Massachusetts Communities:

BROCKTON AREA
55 City Hall Plaza
Brockton, 02401
1-583-1530

BROOKLINE AREA
320 Washington St.
Brookline, 02146
727-7163

CAMBRIDGE AREA
2464 Mass. Ave.
Cambridge, 02138
492-0360

CONCORD AREA
336 Baker St.
Concord, 01742
1-369-1963

FALL RIVER AREA
151 Rock St.
Fall River, 02720
1-678-9041

FITCHBURG AREA
76 Summer St.
Fitchburg, 01420
1-345-1713

HARBOR AREA
59 Temple Place
Boston, 02111
357-8137

GREENFIELD AREA
324 Main St.
Greenfield, 01301
413-774-2326

HOLYOKE AREA
560 Dwight St.
Holyoke, 01040
413-536-8200

HYANNIS AREA
147 Falmouth Rd.
Hyannis, 02601
1-775-6131

LAWRENCE AREA
499 Essex St.
Lawrence, 01840
1-685-1731

LOWELL AREA
24 Merrimack St.
Lowell, 01852
1-457-7544

LYNN AREA
139 Broad St.
Lynn, 01901
539-6604

MALDEN AREA
157 Pleasant St.
Malden, 02148
324-7160

MATTAPAN AREA
80 Boylston St.
Boston, 02116
424-1871

MILFORD AREA
3 Fayette St.
Milford, 01757
1-478-0700

NATICK AREA
83 Speen St.
Natick, 01760
1-655-7500

NEW BEDFORD AREA
848 Pleasant St.
New Bedford, 02740
1-993-6255

NORTH ADAMS AREA
85 Main St.
North Adams, 01247
413-663-5391

NORWOOD AREA
886F Washington St.
Norwood, 02062
769-5950

PITTSFIELD AREA
6 Clinton Ave.
Pittsfield, 01201
413-499-2720

PLYMOUTH AREA
Human Service Ctr.
Lakeville, 02346
1-947-7680

QUINCY AREA
1431 Hancock St.
Quincy, 02169
471-1600

ROXBURY AREA
55 Dimock St.
Roxbury, 02119
442-5510

SOUTHBRIDGE AREA
922 West Main St.
Southbridge, 01550
1-765-5968

SPRINGFIELD AREA
16 Fort St.
Springfield, 01103
413-736-7296

TAUNTON AREA
30 Taunton Green
Taunton, 02780
1-823-8141

TUFTS AREA
256-258 Harrison Ave.
Boston, 02111
482-1780

WORCESTER CITY
75 B Grove St.
Worcester, 01609
1-754-1757

WORCESTER SUBURBAN
110 Lancaster St.
Worcester, 01609
1-791-6301

Specialized units

Corrections
296 Boylston St.
426-8555

Severe Physical Disabilities
80 Boylston St.
426-7250

Boston, 02116

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Administration

The Commission's Administrative Offices have moved from 296 Boylston St., to 20 Providence St., Boston. Our new location in the Statler Office Building has resulted in a stronger organizational cohesiveness due to carefully planned, efficiently used and less costly work spaces.

Administrative responsibilities have been redefined and more consistently delegated through close coordination and communication among members of the Commissioner's staff. Weekly meetings assure statewide consistency and information distribution regarding budget, programs and policies, management and legal issues and all other topics requiring the combined decision making capabilities of these managers.

Monthly meetings with area directors, senior secretarial staff and counselors allow Commissioner Bartels to be aware of issues, needs and concerns of agency staff at all levels, on a one to one basis.

The administration is particularly pleased about the implementation of several interagency agreements, better enabling the Commission to respond to the diverse needs of its clients in a faster, more cost effective manner. One such agreement is with the Department of Education, Division of Special Education, which provides for timely transfer from Chapter 766 services to vocational rehabilitation.

Other significant administrative accomplishments included conversion to a central electronic data processing system, allowing faster payments to vendors and a timely, organized flow of fiscal information. Reorganization of the Public Information Office has given the Commission increased positive community exposure through television, radio and print presentations as well as the coordination of conferences, printed materials and speaker appearances.

Consumerism

There are now 15 Consumer Advisory Councils within three of the six regions as well as two Regional Councils and one Statewide Advisory Council.

Consumer Involvement assures that the agency is aware of and responsive to the needs of the population it serves. Individual consumer consultants have participated in reviewing grants, evaluating interpreter skills, assisting in accessibility studies in the community as well as Commission offices, reviewing the housing modifications program and assisting in staff training.

A question and answer booklet for consumers containing 45 of the most frequently asked questions regarding the Commission has been produced by consumers and is available through the Public Information Office.

Services Provided

A number of services designed to meet particular needs, are available through the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. The following may be provided singly or in combination as needs require:

-Individual counseling and guidance by a professional rehabilitation counselor who evaluates client interests, abilities and needs and helps to choose and attain a suitable vocational goal.

-Medical evaluation, psychological and aptitude testing are used to determine client capabilities.

-Physical restoration services including hospital care and therapy are used to help clients adjust to handicapping conditions.

-Extended employment provides work opportunities for severely mentally and physically handicapped persons who are unable to engage in competitive employment.

-Skill training or education is provided as needed to reach vocational goals. These services may be provided through a school, college, workshop or on the job training program.

-Interpreter services are provided for deaf individuals.

-Job placement and follow up services are provided whether the rehabilitation program leads to employment in the competitive labor market, self employment, sheltered employment in a workshop or work as a homemaker.

-Personal care assistance services are provided to help with essential daily activities and to enable physical handicapped persons to participate in vocational programs and enter/maintain employment.

-Prosthetic devices and aides, such as artificial limbs and wheelchairs are provided.

Other services offered by the Commission include transitional employment, vocational testing and training, group counseling, adaptive housing and van modifications, and independent living rehabilitation.

Meeting Needs

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission met the needs of disabled individuals through specialized programs, including:

-Job Development & Placement — (including Projects With Industry) Counselors help job ready clients in selecting employment opportunities for which to apply. If appropriate, counselors contact employers to develop job opportunities for the client, and help the client to prepare for job interviews through job seeking skills training.

-Independent Living — Services are primarily aimed at those severely disabled persons with mobility impairments. The Commission is one of the first state vocational rehabilitation agencies in the nation to be awarded funding for independent living under a federal grant.

Services are provided through five non-profit programs with which the Commission contracts. These services include outreach, protection, advocacy and non-medical skills building. These programs are:

- Boston Center for Independent Living
- Worcester Area Transitional Housing
- STAVROS Foundation, Inc.
- Independence Associates, Inc.
- Northeastern Massachusetts Independent Living Program

Most of these programs offer additional services such as transitional housing and Personal Care Assistance services, through contracts with the Dept. of Public Welfare Medicaid Program and the Commission.

-Personal Care Assistance Program

This is a state-funded program for severely physically disabled adults who are employed, and who are not eligible for these services under Medicaid because of their employment. The program's services enable them to obtain or retain employment in spite of limitations in their ability to perform daily living activities by providing them the funds to pay for attendants (PCA's) to assist them in carrying out such functions as dressing or routine body care. Each client must hire his own PCA. The program served 40 clients in 1980.

-Ombudsman's Office

The Ombudsman Office functions on a more informal basis than the formal appeals system of Administrative Reviews and Fair Hearings. The bulk of work in this office concerns the resolution of complaints and problems of clients and applicants for services. Complaints frequently concern a perceived lack of service, lack of communication, denial of services or delay in provision of services. Complaints are received from clients, applicants, friends, legislators, public officials or agencies.

-Public Information Office

The Public Information Officer responds to information requests from individuals and organizations in the community as well as to client's and legislator's inquiries regarding all aspects of the program. Information Office communications include distribution of brochures, press and legislative releases, and communicating day to day policy and procedure changes to agencies and individuals throughout Massachusetts.

-Hispanic Counseling Unit

This unit was initiated to better serve and interpret the needs of the Spanish speaking community, and is staffed by bi-lingual, culturally aware professional Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

Human Resources

The Staff Development Unit strives to meet the operational and developmental needs of both the agency and the individual employee. Towards this end, the unit plans, coordinates and directs the overall training and staff development efforts of the Commission, both on an in-service and out-service basis. In addition to this training, the unit provides career counseling services, facilitates major agency and inter-agency conferences, and provides a full service, in-house media production facility for training support.

The chief priority of Staff Development is to train all new counselors entering the agency, first line unit supervisors and area directors. New counselors are trained in four key areas of job functioning: the vocational rehabilitation process, caseload management, vocational assessment planning and job placement. In addition to these priority areas, the unit provides for the continuing education and training of the professional staff at large with in-service medical/psychiatric seminars on specific disabilities and specialized in-house workshops, on Independent Living Rehabilitation, case recording, family and group dynamics and prosthetics and orthotics. The unit also provides skills training and continuing education in a wide variety of areas for secretarial staff.

In 1978, the Staff Development Unit was awarded an RSA grant to fund counselor training in psychiatric rehabilitation, and in 1980 was awarded a short term grant of national scope on the Functional Assessment Profile, a Commission developed diagnostic and planning methodology for counselors.

In the area of Personnel Administration a greater proportion of MRC staff have now attained civil service status as a result of a closer liaison with the State Division of Personnel Administration. Complementing this is an ongoing effort to establish an assessment center examination process for the entry level Vocational Rehabilitation counselor position.

The implementation of a performance appraisal system for all staff of the Commission was established in 1980 to improve the efficiency of Commission operations. A more sophisticated Personnel Policy and Procedures Handbook has been completed and available since 1977, and is constantly updated and revised.

Supporting Our Services

Disability Determination Services (DDS)

The objective of the Division of Disability Determination Services is to provide Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) claimants with decisions that are fair and equitable, timely and cost-effective. The quality of these decisions is carefully monitored both within the State agency and at Federal levels of case review.

The DDS is 100% federally funded, and brings the equivalent of $350,000,000 in total SSI and SSDI benefits into the Commonwealth annually. The marked increase in case dispositions over the past four years is primarily the impact of Federal legislation and the 1980 Amendments to the Social Security Act.

Within the D.D.S., the Program Development staff has had an opportunity to fully evaluate fiscal procedures and has significantly standardized the process of expediting the (over) 100,000 invoices received each year. A reorganization of the personnel and training offices into a consolidated Human Resource Department is broadening DDS's ability to meet staffing needs. Additionally, the newly created Program Development Unit has been instrumental in establishing many new procedures and setting up new work systems in all departments.

The Library

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Library has served its staff and the community since 1963, when it was established as a special resource center of publications about handicapped persons. It provides an organized collection of literature available to rehabilitation counselors and administrators, teachers, students, researchers, government agencies, private companies and hospitals, unavailable elsewhere in New England. The collection is composed of texts, technical reports, journals, rehabilitation references, films, audiotapes, and rehabilitation research reports. With the exception of journals, most materials circulate for the convenience of users. The percentage of use of this special library is almost equally divided between staff and community. In 1977, *Bits and Pieces*, a bi-monthly newsletter-acquisitions feature, was initiated to inform users of current literature about the disabled. Due to the growth of the library, in November 1978, the collection was moved to larger quarters, and is now accessible to wheelchair users, and other handicapped individuals. The library is staffed by two professional librarians, and is open all day, five days a week.

The Information Center

The Information Center for Individuals with Disabilities is a private, non-profit organization which serves persons with disabilities, all provider agencies, or anyone who desires information *for* persons with disabilities. Founded in 1977 by a mother with two disabled children, the Center offers information on housing, equipment, employment, education, law and eleven other subject categories. Additionally, the Center puts out a monthly newsletter, TOGETHER, which features articles on new equipment, service agencies, meetings, play and restaurant reviews plus much more. Additionally, the Center writes and distributes fact sheets featuring possible solutions to common problems faced by persons with disabilities.

The Center operates principally under two contracts, one from the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission to provide information and referral to the disabled community. The Information Center handled over 6500 requests for information in 1980 and projects a 33% rise in requests each year.

The second contract is from the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and is basically an information gathering project which complements the contract with the Rehabilitation Commission. The project provides for in-depth surveys of agencies serving the disabled community and assembling them by region and service category. This project is designed to let the visually-impaired, multiply disabled person live more independently by providing better accessibility to the service provider network.

The Massachusetts Office of Deafness

The Massachusetts Office of Deafness officially opened in July, 1977 to address the needs of hearing impaired citizens throughout Massachusetts.

In the past four years, with an average staff of four, the Office has:

-Established and expanded an information and referral service for deaf and hard of hearing citizens and their service providers.

-Developed a Statewide Interpreter Referral Service, with requests totalling over 1,120 in 1980.

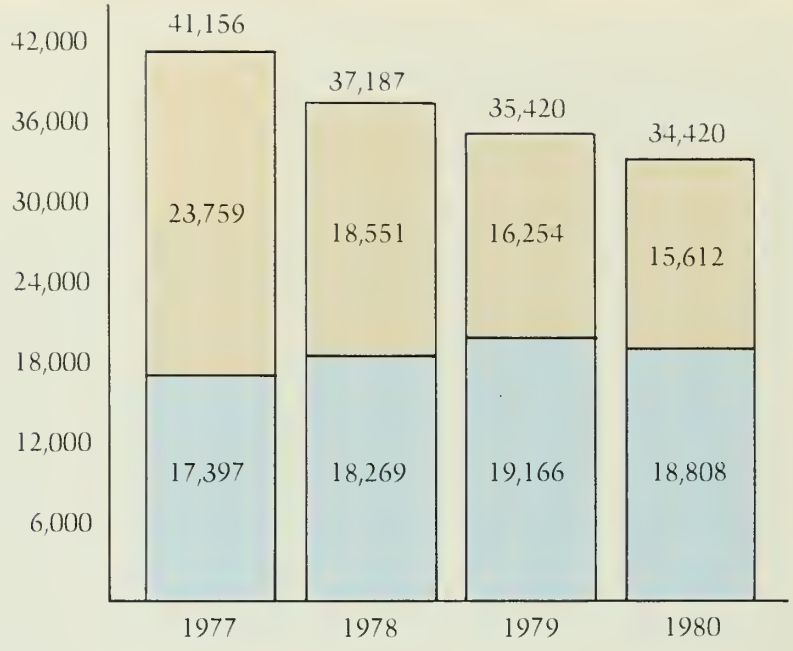
-Worked to establish a branch office to serve hearing impaired citizens in the western part of the state (approximate opening date, June, 1981).

-Set up an Interagency Committee to promote cooperation and coordination among state agencies.

-Published the first newspaper for the deaf, THE DEAF INDEPENDENT, for hearing impaired citizens in Massachusetts (circulation 5,000). Published a quarterly newsletter, "Highlights" for service providers to the deaf and hard of hearing community.

-Developed, in cooperation with the Bureau of Systems Operations, a Central Register for hearing impaired persons to improve outreach and to develop and expand services to all hearing impaired citizens.

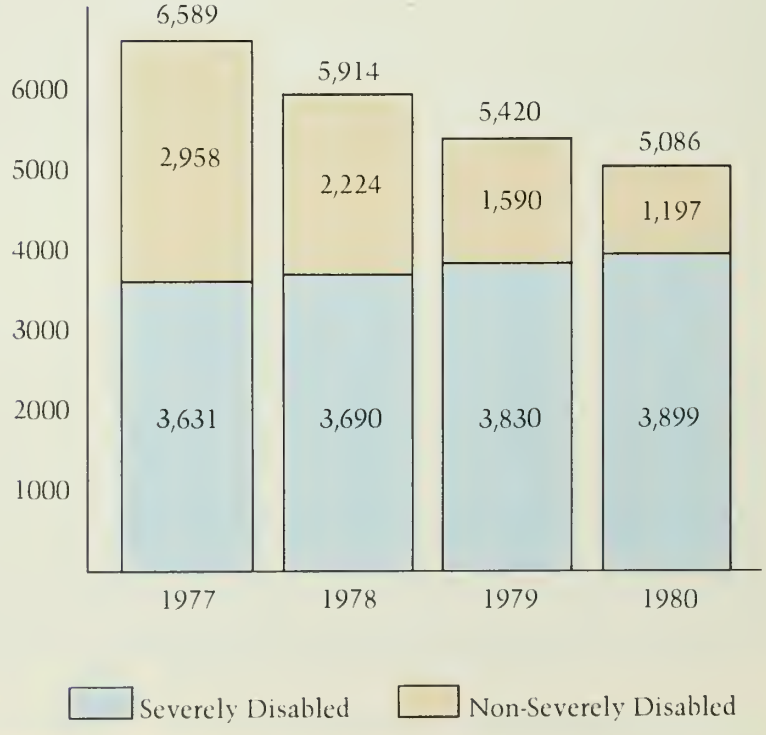
Clients Served



Federal and State Revenues for Vocational Rehabilitation

$21.3 mil. $23.1 mil. $25.1 mil. $25.5 mil.

Rehabilitations



Administration and Finance

The Administration and Support Division provides the Commission's direct services operation with those support services necessary to serve clients in an effective manner. Those functions provided by the Division include budgeting, fiscal operations, electronic data processing and word processing operations, statistics, property management, stockroom, and duplication services.

The Commission's funding source for its general rehabilitation program is primarily Federal Funds, with the State participating in the total. Funding for other related programs such as the Extended Employment Program, Massachusetts Office of Deafness, and the Personal Care Assistance Program is fully State provided.

The Commission has also been very successful in attracting additional funds for services by competing for Federal Grant money.

In recent years, the total increase in program funds has not kept pace with inflation, but the Commission has been able to maintain services due to the implementation of budget controls and cost saving measures.

Our Financial Electronic Data Processing System became operational in June 1979 after a development and testing stage. With the advent of our computer system, we now receive accurate and timely financial information for internal planning along with a link to the Comptroller's Accounting System. This system has substantially reduced Personnel Costs within the Administration and Support Division and has eliminated a number of reports and tasks previously done at the area office.

Additional use of modern office equipment, such as our Word Processing System, has allowed the agency to consolidate clerical positions and process our informational needs in a more efficient manner.

In order that we may provide the best service possible to our clients, the Commission recognizes the importance of a well-managed and cost-effective support service organization at both the administrative office and service locations.

Future Plans

-To provide vocational rehabilitation services to all handicapped clients and serve the most severely handicapped on a priority basis as well as expand the Extended Employment Program.

-To expand the role of the consumer in the policy and program direction of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.

-To expand the Personal Care Assistance Program for eligible clients of the Commission and further develop an Independent Living Rehabilitation Program of services enabling clients to live and function at their maximum potential at home, at work and in the mainstream of daily life.

-To assure that eligible clients are provided the full range of quality and timely rehabilitation services necessary to affect their vocational rehabilitation and to increase their capacity to function independently in the family and community,

-To add an automated client tracking component to the Commission's automated financial system in order to better manage client services and more efficiently meet our reporting requirements to the State and Federal Government

-And to provide the Commission's direct service operation with those support services necessary to serve clients in an effective and efficient manner.

Elmer C. Bartels
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CUT ON DOTTED LINES

Please send additional information regarding:

☐ Consumer involvement ☐ Clients' rights and responsibilities

☐ Services of the Commission ☐ Other _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ APT _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

The Massachusetts
Rehabilitation
Commissions Salutes

1981 — The International
Year of Disabled Persons

Please mail to: Public Information Office

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Statler Office Building

20 Providence Street

Boston, Mass. 02116

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